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below the Nâyar is permitted to enter. To the north, south, east, and west, there is a level entrance into this hollow square, and beyond this entrance no man of inferior caste may go. The Pânan receives a certain quantity, about 10 lb. of raw rice for his performance.

In the afternoon a small crowd of Vettuvars come to the temple carrying with them swords, not very dangerous ones, and about ten small baskets made of cocoanut palm leaves, containing salt.* These baskets are carried slung on a pole as before. These men dance and shout in much excitement, cutting their heads with their own swords in their frenzy. Some of them represent devils or some kind of inferior evil spirits, and dance madly, under the influence of these spirits which they represent. Then comes the Arayân as on the previous day with his little procession, and lastly comes the blacksmith with the sword.

It is explained by the Malayalis that the individuals of the various castes who hold the office of tailor, goldsmith and so on to the temple, do so, not for the sake of what they receive from the temple, but in order to mark their position of superiority in their caste. The ceremonial allotted to each also no doubt marks his position in the ladder of caste.

The procession in the evening of this the seventh and last day is a great affair. Eight elephants which kept line beautifully, took part in this when I witnessed it. One of them very handsomely caparisoned had on its back a priest (Mûssad) carrying a sword smothered in garlands of red flowers representing the goddess. Up to this time, when she is represented by a sword, it will be remembered she has been represented by an image. The elephant bearing the priest with the sword is bedizened on the forehead with two golden discs, one on each side of the forehead, and over the centre of the forehead hangs a long golden ornament.† He bears other jewels, and over his back is a large canopy-like red cloth richly wrought. Before the elephant walked a Nâyar carrying in his right hand in front of him a sword of the kind

* The use of salt here is obscure as to the purpose. I remember a case of a Nâyar's house having been plundered, the idol was knocked down and salt was put in the place where it should have stood. The act was looked on as most insulting.

† The discs on the elephant's forehead are common in Malabar in affairs of ceremony. The Mappila poets are very fond of comparing a beautiful girl's breast to these cup-like discs.

In the south-east of Malabar, in the neighbourhood of Palghat, the Ônam games are of a rougher character, the tenants of certain jenmis (landlords) turning out each under their own leader, and engaging in sham fights in which there is much rough play. Here, too, is to be seen a kind of boxing which would seem to be a relic of the days of the Roman pugiles using the cestus in combat. The position taken up by the combatants is much the same as that of the pugiles. The Romans were familiar with Malabar from about 30 B.C. to the decline of their power. We may safely assume that the "3,000 lbs. of pepper" which Alarie demanded as part of the ransom of Rome when he besieged the city in the fifth century, came from Malabar.*

Before ending this very incomplete account of customs of the Nâyars, mention must be made of two more of these, both odd. Ever since Châraman Perumal departed from the west coast of India in A.D. 825, setting sail for Arabia and Mecca, having divided up his kingdom, His Highness the Maharajah of Travancore when ascending his throne says: "I ascend the musnud, and will rule until my uncle returns." The "uncle" is Châraman Perumal, the last sovereign of the west coast, who, having embraced the Muhammadan religion which was brought to his shores by Arab traders, proceeded to carry out a wild idea—so goes the legend—of receiving instruction from the Prophet himself! He never returned. To one princeling was given the territory now known as Travancore, and his surviving successor (through the female line of course) is the present Maharajah of Travancore. To another he gave Cochin, the ruler of which State also inherits through the female line. To the ancestor of the Zamorin of Calicut the Perumal gave no territory, as to the others, but he gave him his sword (it is still in existence) with the advice "to die and kill and annex." That he annexed is quite clear, as he was the sovereign not only of Calicut but of the country round about when modern Europeans first visited the west coast of India. Like the Maharajah of Travancore, the Zamorin repeats the formula that he rules until his uncle returns, but in his case it forms part of an elaborate and costly ceremony. The fort, which was the official residence of the Zamorin,

* See Madras Government Museum Catalogue No. 2, Roman Coins, by Mr. Edgar Thurston, Superintendent of the Museum.

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796 stick, it is possible to produce a kind of musical tone, for
[534] which a party is organised to play on it. This entertainment is much admired, and interests the people very much.

(2). *Tiruvâtira*:—This is another important national festival, which falls on the *Tiruvâtira* day in Dhanu (December-
[776] January). This concerns the Nayar women, and is said to commemorate the death of *Kâma Dêva*, the cupid of Indian mythology, by the burning fire of the third eye of the God
[533] Siva. Before day-break the festive day, the young women of the Nayar families hasten to the nearest tank or river for bathing, and during the bath, they amuse themselves with *Tiruvâtira pîttu*, songs accompanied by regular splashing of water, supposed to be symbolical of beating of the breast, on account of their grief for Kama's death. At day-break, they return home, and, gaily dressed and adorned, they
[526] go to the nearest temple for worship. After a slight breakfast, they proceed to enjoy the *Uzhinjal* (a swinging apparatus made of bamboo and attached to a horizontal branch of a tree).
[264] Immense pleasure is taken in this game. The family dinner
[262] is at noon, when bananas, sliced and fried in cocoanut-oil,
[431] seasoned with salt, are freely distributed among the friends and relatives assembled there. Ripe plantains, and the sweet pre-
[263] paration of arrow-root flour purified and seasoned with jaggery or sugar and cocoanuts, also form one of the chief items of the feast.

[804] (3). *Vishu*:—Next in importance to the two great national
[777] festivals just described, comes *Vishu* on the first of Medam (March-April), which is the astronomical new year's day; and a man's prosperity during the year is believed to depend on his seeing some good and lucky thing on the *Vishu* morning. It is the custom to prepare on the night previous, what is known as *Kani*. A bell-metal vessel (*uruli*) is taken, and in it are arranged a *grantha* or cadjan manuscript, a gold ornament, a new washed cloth, some flowers of the *konna* tree (Cassia fistula), some coins in a silver cup, a cocoanut cut into two, a cucumber, some mangoes, and a jack-fruit. On either side of the vessel, are also placed two lamps burning, while there is a plank of wood or some other seat placed in front of it. These are placed in the chief room inside the house, and in the morning, the members of the family, one by one, are taken to the

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241 the gate of the houses, he is met by a woman with a lighted lamp and some leaves on which is placed the rice. This is carried into the yard in procession, while those assembled cry out, 'Fill, fill, increase, fill the house, fill the basket, fill the stomach of the children'. Three times is it carried on a plantain leaf placed on a wooden plank while the lighted lamp is placed on the right. Ganapati is then propitiated with offerings, and stalks of paddy with ears of grain in them are stuck with cow-dung to the various parts of the house, to the agricultural implements, and even to trees. A sumptuous breakfast brings the ceremony to a close.

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Puthari:—The next ceremony is the formal cooking and eating of the new rice (*Puthari*). It sometimes takes place on the *Nira* day, but generally it is an independent festival. An auspicious day is chosen as soon as the first crop is harvested and threshed—a day which must be before the *Onam*. The rice is cooked and eaten with a special curry made of *tagara* (Cassia tora) peas, the fruit of *puthari chunda* (Swertia Cherata), brinjals (Solanum Melongena) and green pumpkin.

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Ucharal:—At the end of Makaram (January-February), when the second crop has been harvested, the year's agricultural operations are supposed to be over, and Mother Earth, *Bhumi Dévi*, is considered to rest during the hot weather until the first shower begins. At the beginning of this period the Malayali observes a festival in honour of the Goddess' menstruation, which, like the *Roman Februria*, is supposed to take place at this time. On the last three days during this festival, all granaries are closed, paddy is not sold, and no implement of agriculture is touched, while even the rice to be eaten during these three days is pounded before-hand. On the first day before sunset the granaries are closed, some thorns and shrubs of broom are fixed to the door and cow-dung and ashes are spread in front of it. The next two days are holidays for all; the house must not be swept, nor the floors smeared with cow-dung, and the garden even may not be swept or watered. On the fourth day the granaries are opened, and a basketful of leaves is taken to the field and burnt with a little manure perhaps to indicate that the cultivator remains in possession.

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